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Son of WWII veteran visits Glenwood City to honor Ellen Ainsworth

By LeAnn R. Ralph
GLENWOOD CITY — The son of a World War II veteran who credits Ellen Ainsworth with saving his father's life in 1944 during the Battle of Anzio has visited Glenwood City to honor her memory.

Keith Giddens, the author of "Payne City, A personal account from a lone survivor during WWII, a member of the 3rd Infantry Division, 30th Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Co. K," visited Glenwood City March 1 and told some of his father's story at the Glenwood Area Historical Society Museum.

Giddens and his wife, Kristi, live in South Carolina. Their son lives in the Twin Cities, and while visiting their son, Keith Giddens also wanted to visit Glenwood City.

Ellen Ainsworth was born in 1919 in Glenwood City and graduated from nursing school in Minneapolis in 1941. She enlisted in the United States Army Nurse Corps in March of 1942 and served as a Second Lieutenant in Tunisia before going to Anzio, Italy.

Giddens' book, while not yet available in a print version, is available online through Amazon.

Giddens said his father, Vrozell Broadus Giddens, known as "Dock," landed in Anzio at 2:30 a.m. January 22, 1944. He had been in North Africa prior to what the soldiers had thought was going to be a beach landing at Anzio.

Instead, they were put out in 10 feet of water.

Dock and the rest of Company K walked in nine miles to Bridge 12, where they started fighting the Germans. They went five days without food and four days without water, because they had outstripped the supply chain, Giddens said.

On January 29, they went back to Bridge 12 and learned there were friends there and not enemies.

Surely, someone must have water, Dock thought.

The Germans saw the movement.

In the movies, Giddens said, you hear the whistling of the mortars, but that does not mean anything. The fins whistle in the distance.

But if the shell is close, you hear "chunk, chunk, chunk" — and as Dock was drinking water, he heard "chunk, chunk, chunk."

Dock Giddens was hit with a 50 millimeter mortar "that took out his left side," which included his kidney, spleen and part of his lung, Giddens said.

Somehow, the wound cauterized itself — and Dock kept drinking water. He walked the half mile to the rail bed, where he was waiting to be transported.

A Second Lieutenant walked by, and Dock noticed he had a canteen and asked if he could have some water.

The Second Lieutenant noted that water was in short supply but gave Dock the canteen, and "Dad drank the water," Giddens said.

The Second Lieutenant "left my Dad and said he could walk back the nine miles," he said.

So, Dock walked the nine miles back to the beachhead. The temperature was never above freezing. His toes, feet and hands were black with frostbite, and he had a hole in his side.

"By the time he arrives, he's basically knocking on death's door," Giddens said.

Evac hospital
Ellen Ainsworth was among the nurses who had set up the 56th Evacuation Hospital.

The full invasion happened on January 31, 1944.



FAMILY VISIT — Keith Giddens, who credits Ellen Ainsworth with saving his father's life during World War II, visited Glenwood City with his family March 1 to honor Ellen's memory. From left: Benjamin Giddens, Keith Giddens and Kristi Giddens. — photo by LeAnn R. Ralph

When Dock had landed, there were 36,000 soldiers from the United States Army and only 2,000 Germans, but then the Germans went up to 90,000, Giddens said.

When Dock walked into the evacuation hospital, they said, "You're going to die." Hospital personnel did not give Dock anything for pain or treat his wounds

because they said they were saving time, effort and supplies for people who could live, Giddens said.

A nurse named Rita O'Rourke put Dock in a body bag, and he dictated a letter to his mother.

The nurses stayed with Dock throughout the night, as did a chaplain. "The next morning, my dad was alive,"

Giddens said.

"Rita O'Rourke compelled the surgeons to do something for him — and my dad lived," he said.

The letter to Dock's mother was not mailed, "but he's not in good shape," Giddens said, noting that his father was 19 years old at the time, was five feet, six inches tall and weighed 125 pounds.

Giddens said his father had told the family nothing of his experiences until 1994, when they took him for a 50th anniversary reunion.

Most World War II veterans came back, did not see themselves as heroes, and went about their lives, Giddens said.

Ambulances
At the reunion in 1994, Giddens said he met a major who had been with the 15th Infantry Division and who had been in a mortar division about two miles from where his dad had been.

People are wondering, why are the Germans bombing evacuation hospitals and Red Crosses? he said.

The major said he kept seeing ambulances coming down out of the mountains. He could not figure out why the Germans had so many ambulances, so he said, "We're going to shoot one," Giddens said.

On January 24 (or 25), 1944, they shot a two-inch mortar at an ambulance.

"That ambulance went off for about two hours. It was full of munitions," Giddens said.

The Germans were using the Red Cross and ambulances as a cover to get supplies and munitions to their front-line troops and using them to store weapons so they would not be bombed, he said.

"You know, if you cheat on a test, you

Ainsworth Honored
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St. Croix County Board approves \$80 million for government center project

By LeAnn R. Ralph
HUDSON — The St. Croix County Board has approved issuing \$80 million in general obligation bonds to fund the expansion and remodeling project of the government center on Carmichael Road in Hudson.

The resolution to issue general obligation bonds for the government center project has been "repackaged" after the St. Croix County Board's vote last month to reject the resolution, said Ken Witt, county administrator, at the county board's March 1 meeting.

The Hudson Police Department has been removed from the project for a savings of \$10 million, said Adam Kastonek, St. Croix County public information officer.

St. Croix County is the second-fastest growing county in Wisconsin, and when the

government center was built in 1993, the population was 50,000. Today, the population of St. Croix County has almost doubled, and in 2040, population projections indicate the county's population will be 119,000, he said.

The increased population means there is an increased need for services, and more space is needed to provide those services, Kastonek said.

Modifications were made to the proposal for the government center based on concerns expressed by county board supervisors at the February meeting, he said.

Several St. Croix County Board members expressed concern about the cost and allocating space for the Hudson Police Department with no guarantee that the police department would occupy the space or that the City of Hudson would cover the cost, Kastonek

said.

The work that has been done so far is to determine the space needs and establish a budget. If the resolution to issue \$80 million in general obligation bonds is approved, then the design phase will begin, and there will be more opportunity for input from the county board and county employees, he said.

More space
According to information posted on St. Croix County's website, for the sheriff's department, the project will include a public lobby, training rooms, evidence labs, interview rooms, increased storage space and secure parking.

For judicial services, the project will include additional courtrooms, a children's waiting area for

SCC Board
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DC PR&D approves continued use of existing access easement in Town of Sherman rather than 66-foot wide road

By LeAnn R. Ralph
MENOMONIE — The Dunn County Planning, Resources and Development Committee has approved the continued use of an existing 20-foot-wide access easement instead of requiring a 66-foot wide road for a property in the Town of Sherman.

Scott and Anita Sykora own 33 acres on 410th Street in the Town of Sherman that has an existing house, outbuildings, well and septic with a 20-foot wide perpetual access easement to 410th Street and no direct access to a public road, said Tom Carlson, Dunn County surveyor, at the Planning, Resources and Development committee's February 22 meeting.

The Sykoras are proposing

to parcel off the existing improvements with 10 acres and are proposing to access the new lot with the existing 20-foot-wide access easement. The easement was granted in 2003, he said.

Using the 20-foot-wide access easement with the newly-created lot does not meet the 66-foot-wide road requirement in Dunn County's new land division ordinance, Carlson said.

The role of the PR&D committee is not to approve the Certified Survey Map (CSM), but rather, to determine the suitability of the existing 20-foot-wide easement and what conditions, if any, need to be met to provide for adequate access to the proposed new lot, he said.

Under the county's land division

ordinance, "existing public or private roads or easements that are proposed to provide access to newly created lots shall meet the requirement of this section. If a road does not meet such requirements, the subdivider shall meet with the town and [PR&D] committee to determine the suitability of the existing road."

The Sherman Plan Commission and the Sherman Town Board have approved the CSM and a note added to the CSM indicates the need for public town road access to the remaining land if the lots should ever be proposed to be built upon, Carlson said.

DC PR&D
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A MEET AND GREET of area candidates was held at The Pumphouse in Downing Saturday evening, March 5. U.S. Representative Tom Tiffany, State Senator Rob Stafsholt, and State Representative Clint Moses came out to support local Glenwood City School Board candidates Nicole Miller and Amy Dopkins as well as District 17 St. Croix County Board Supervisor candidate Sean Lybert and District 19 St. Croix County County Board Supervisor candidate Jen Flanders. Pictured above from left to right: Sean Lybert, Tom Tiffany, Amy Dopkins, Jen Flanders, Nicole Miller, Rob Stafsholt and Clint Moses. — photo submitted

Dunn County Board discusses levy limits, highway funding with state legislators

By LeAnn R. Ralph
MENOMONIE — The Dunn County Board met with state legislators from the area during a special Zoom meeting February 28 to discuss a variety of priorities, including the state's levy limit law and generating more funding for highways.

Much of the county's operating revenue comes from the property tax levy for a variety of services provided to the residents of the county, such as the sheriff's department, human services, public health, veteran's services, highways and county facilities,

said Gary Stene, county board supervisor from Colfax and vice-chair of the county board.

In 2006, the state legislature passed a property tax levy limit law that restricts the increase in the levy limit to the percentage of net new construction, he said.

Whatever the intention of the law was, "the effect over time has been to strangle local governments (in their ability) to provide the services and programs demanded and deserved by its citizens," Stene said.

Since the adoption of the levy limit law, the percentage of net

new construction in Dunn County has been less than the increase in costs for goods and services, he said.

Although it has been a small difference from year to year, the cumulative effect has been to cause the county to fall farther and farther behind, Stene said.

The consequences are that Dunn County has had to spend from the reserves in the fund balance or to borrow money to help balance the budget, and borrowing

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